

News Release

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For Immediate Release

Local Volunteers Needed To Lend Helping Hands On Public Lands Day at Yakima River Canyon Recreation Site

Ellensburg, Washington –The Bureau of Land Management’s Umtanum Recreation site will get a facelift and a new wildlife viewing area, as local area residents lend helping hands on the largest annual single-day volunteer restoration effort for public lands. Volunteers are needed to pitch in at Umtanum to install a bench and interpretive sign, paint picnic tables, improve trails, and clean up the camp area, as part of the 10th annual National Public Lands Day (NPLD) on Saturday, September 27, 2003. The Umtanum Recreation site is about 10 miles south of Ellensburg, off Highway 821.

People wanting to participate in the event should call Diane Priebe, recreation specialist at the Wenatchee BLM office, telephone (509) 536-2100. Priebe says, “This is a great opportunity for families and civic organizations to work together to help improve a popular recreational area.” The event will be from 9:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m., and lunch will be provided to the volunteers. People interested in volunteering should call in advance to facilitate event and lunch planning.

Sponsored by Toyota Motor Sales USA, NPLD brings thousands of volunteers throughout America together to refurbish and restore the country’s public places. These are lands and facilities used for recreation, education, and just plain enjoyment. They encompass national parks, monuments, wildlife refuges, forests, grasslands, marine sanctuaries, lakes, and reservoirs managed by federal government agencies, but belonging to and enjoyed by all Americans. The theme for this year’s NPLD is “Lend A Hand To America’s Lands.”

“Each year, thousands of Americans demonstrate the importance of our country’s lands by contributing millions of dollars worth of labor and supplies on National Public Lands Day,” said Kevin Coyle, president of The National Environmental Education & Training Foundation (NEETF), which coordinates the effort. “This day-long event embodies the national focus on volunteerism and reflects the country’s commitment to preserving its public places for future generations.”

Nearly 80,000 volunteers are expected at 500 sites for NPLD 2003. NEETF estimates that the volunteers’ work, along with community contributions of food, tools, and equipment, will result in more than \$8 million of improvements and provide the “Helping Hands for America’s Lands.”

By educating volunteers at work sites across the country, NPLD maintains the legacy of the Civilian Conservation Corps, an army of 3 million Americans who in the 1930s countered the devastation of the Dust Bowl and the American chestnut blight by planting more than 3 billion trees, building 800 state parks, and fighting forest fires.

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Since its inception in 1994, NPLD has dramatically demonstrated Americans' concern for their public lands. The first event was sponsored by three federal agencies and attracted 700 volunteers to three sites. Last year, nine federal agencies and 125 state and local partners supported the efforts of some 70,000 volunteers at 426 sites.

The nine participating federal agencies are the National Park Service, USDA Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Army Corps of Engineers, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, Department of Defense, Environmental Protection Agency, and Tennessee Valley Authority. Other event partners are the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, National Association of Service Conservation Corps, Wonderful Outdoor World, Garden Club of America, National Parks Conservation Association, and International Mountain Bicycling Association.

Chartered by Congress in 1990, NEETF is a private non-profit organization that develops and supports environmental learning programs to meet social goals, and builds partnerships between government, the private sector, and non-governmental organizations.

For more information about the National Public Lands Day event at Umtanum Recreation Site along the Yakima River Canyon, contact Diane Priebe at the BLM Wenatchee Office, telephone (509) 665-2100. You can also see a list of NPLD sites, activities, contacts, and downloadable photos from past events on <www.npld.com>.

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